

settler societies, such as the United States or Australia, who faced similar dilemmas in their encounters with Indigenous modernity.

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WESTHUES, Anne, and Brian WHARF (eds.) – *Canadian Social Policy. Issues and Perspectives*, 5th edition. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012. Pp. 440.

New editions of Anne Westhues's edited text on current Canadian social policies are always welcome to students of social policy in Canada. Edition five benefits from the co-editing of Brian Wharf, for years Canada's foremost scholar on community social development. Sadly Professor Wharf passed away in August, 2011, as work on the book neared completion. Some of the topics explored in this book are mental health, child poverty, child welfare, disabilities, racism, and Aboriginal welfare. Every chapter is characterized by a focus on social determinants of health, and by a critical analysis of unequal power relations in every aspect of social policy, from the Canadian Human Rights Commission to risk assessment policies in child welfare.

Historians however will find Westhues's volume to be aimed too squarely at social work students and practitioners, to be disappointingly narrow in its limited efforts to locate the origins of the social attitudes and disparities of power that it emphasizes throughout. One notable exception is Yves Vaillancourt's chapter, "The Quebec Model of Social Policy, Past and Present". The chapter traces Québec's changing paradigms of social policy from the late nineteenth century, when anti-statism predominated, through to the Quiet Revolution and its "entrepreneurial" model of the state's obligations, and finally to a more recent model of the state as a partner with civil society in the social policy arena. Vaillancourt rejects the notion that there has been consistent neo-liberalism in Quebec social policy in the period after 1980, regarding the Parti Québécois government policies from 1994 to 2003 as progressive overall, and reflecting a willingness of the state to work with non-government partners rather than an abandonment of the government's role in social policy.

Marilyn Callahan and Karen Swift, in their critique of the underlying attitudes regarding risk assessment in child welfare, which was introduced about two decades ago, attempt to locate its origins in earlier events. They note that revelations about battered children in the 1960s, child sexual abuse in the 1970s, and violence within families in the 1980s necessitated a social response, but suggest that the policies adopted "reified the explanation that individual family pathology is at the core of this maltreatment" (p. 204). The solutions proposed and adopted ignore the colonial subjection of Native peoples, racism, poverty, gender inequality, and much more. Therese Jennissen and Colleen Lundy, in their excellent history of Canadian social work, *One Hundred Years of Social Work: A History of the Profession in English Canada, 1900-2000*, document the constant struggle within the field between a strain of thought, focused on "case work," in which social causation is largely eclipsed, and social justice perspectives. Over time, the latter have come to dominate the profession, though their relative importance in the larger society has waxed and waned with the former

exerting its relative dominance once again in the period of capitalist crisis that began in the mid-1970s. Somehow, though, in the Callahan and Swift account, the struggle between these two perspectives is obscured. Society and the state appear to have gone in one direction and the authors, looking in from the outside, in the other. While this works well enough as a critique of the contours of current policy, it unfortunately makes it appear as if supporters of a more society-centred approach both in the formulation and implementation of policies in the area of child welfare have been missing in action. That is misleading.

Geoffrey Nelson's chapter, "Mental Health Policy in Canada," provides a more nuanced, more historical, and more hopeful accounting of a social policy area than the uniformly bleak chapter by Callahan and Swift. Nelson traces the development of the mental health field which, he notes, has had a biomedical perspective since the late nineteenth century. But he mentions the challenges to that model that have been launched at least since Thomas Szasz argued in the early 1960s that the model was fraudulent since it failed to demonstrate any physical basis for the behaviours that it claims to treat, behaviours that are objected to for reasons of social value as opposed to any proof that they constitute illness. The psychological profession's uninformed efforts to characterize homosexuality as a mental disorder, dropped only in 1973, are presented as one example of the extent to which notions of mental health constitute social relations of power rather than scientific investigations of the adequate functioning of an individual human's nervous system. Nonetheless, as Nelson makes clear, there are many individuals who find integration within their communities to be a great challenge and who need help. Social stigmas associated with mental health have made it difficult for them to seek help, and the type of help available at various times and in various places has been questionable. There have been many exceptions however to this depressing tableau. Nelson mentions holistic therapies, including feminist therapies and community mental health alternatives with focuses on empowerment and social justice, while acknowledging that the medical model, which largely empowers psychiatrists rather than those seeking help and their families and communities, remains entrenched for the moment.

Other essays in the book fall somewhere between the nuanced historical treatment of Nelson and Callahan and Swift's gaze on the most powerful, without any nod to the ideas and work of others within society to effect social change, a gaze which is nonetheless cogent. I would hope that, in future editions, Anne Westhues might use articles like those of Nelson and Vaillancourt as the model for their authors. It would make for a book that is not only an effective critique of current government policies, but one that also provides a more historically grounded explanation of both the origins of policies and the debates that have existed around paradigmatic approaches throughout various periods.

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WRIGHT, David – *Downs: The History of a Disability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 256.

Downs: The History of a Disability by David Wright traces the Syndrome from the European medieval period through to the discovery of Trisomy 21 in 1959 and into the present